

REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated March 10, 2009. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 10 are pending in this application, with claims 1 and 9 being in independent form. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9 have been amended. It is submitted that no new matter has been added and no new issues have been raised by the present Amendment.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly obvious from U.S. Patent 6,524,251 to Rabiner et al. in view of U.S. Patent 5,931,787 to Dietz et al. and U.S. Patent 5,954,637 to Francis. Applicants have carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and respectfully submit independent claims 1 and 9 are patentable over the cited art, for at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1 relates to a catheter for insertion into the human body and which includes one or more optionally scanning ultrasonic transducers as well as a surgical instrument to be operated from the outside. The catheter comprises at least two parts of a substantially completely circular or partially circular cross section, where a rod is inserted between said parts and at the end is provided with an ultrasonic transducer. The completely or partially circular parts are surrounded by an outer tube passed over the completely or partially circular parts, and where the surface of at least one of the completely or partially circular parts is provided with a longitudinal groove for the insertion of the surgical instrument. The completely or partially circular parts removably engage each other and are kept together by said outer tube when the catheter is assembled. The partially circular parts include abutting surfaces shaped so that they can be locked relative to one another. The completely or partially circular parts are capable of being removed from the outer tube and disengaged from each other for sterilization/disinfecting purposes.

The present disclosure relates to a catheter for insertion into the human body that is very

user-friendly and is easy to disassemble for disinfecting and sterilizing purposes. Since the catheter is formed of at least two parts of a substantially completely circular or partially circular cross section which include abutting surfaces shaped so that they can be locked relative to one another, the parts can be readily broken down after use so that the parts can be more easily and more completely disinfected and sterilized. The parts can also be readily reassembled.

Rabiner et al., as understood by Applicants, relates to an ultrasonic device for tissue ablation and sheath for use therewith. Fig. 3F shows a sheath with two semi-cylindrical halves that are connected to each other by one or more connecting means. There is no indication in the Rabiner et al. that the two semi-cylindrical halves are separable in any manner.

Dietz et al. was cited as allegedly teaching a longitudinal groove.

The Office Action acknowledges that the combination of Rabiner et al. and Dietz et al. does not directly disclose the circular or partially circular cross section parts being removably engageable with one another. The Office Action cites Francis as allegedly disclosing two housing pieces removably engageable and locked relative to one another. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Francis relates to a multi-use disposable endoscope capable of being sterilized and reused for a number of surgical procedures and then discarded. The Office Action states that Francis teaches two housing pieces 110a, 110b removably engageable and locked relative to one another, citing Figure 2.

As understood by Applicants, in Francis, housing half sections 110, 110b include pins and a tongue and groove arrangement for securing the half sections together. The tongue and groove arrangement “forms a fluid tight seal at the interface of half sections 110a, 110b, thus, precluding the passage of fluids within the housing 102 during and subsequent to

sterilization” (col. 4, lines 43 – 61.) That is, as understood by Applicant, Francis discloses that the housing 102 is sealed to *prevent fluids* from entering the housing during sterilization.

Francis does not allow the housing parts to be disengaged for sterilization as claimed.

Applicants respectfully submit that Francis teaches away from completely or partially circular parts capable of being removed from the outer tube and disengaged from each other for sterilization/disinfecting purposes, as recited in independent claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit independent claim 1 is patentable over the cited art. Independent claim 9 is believed to be patentable over the cited art, for at least similar reasons.

Accordingly, Applicants submit independent claims 1 and 9 are now in condition for allowance.

The Office is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition, and the Commissioner is authorized to charge the requisite fees to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Entry of this amendment and allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard F. Jaworski", is written over a horizontal line.

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